
United States Government Response to the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

(September 2, 12:35 p.m.) Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff outlined actions underway as part of a massive Federal effort to save lives, sustain lives and support recovery and law enforcement operations in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Currently on the ground, there are more than 15,000 National Guardsmen; 7,800 U.S. Military personnel; 4,000 Coast Guard personnel; more than 400 federal law enforcement officers; and 61 FEMA Response Teams.

Working with state and local authorities, we are making available essential supplies and medical assistance; and we continue to execute a comprehensive and urgent recovery effort. So far, the federal government has moved millions of commodities of water, ice and meals ready to eat (MREs) into the affected areas, totaling more than 125 tons of relief supplies. As of this morning, more than 4,500 lives have been saved, more than 30,000 people have been assisted, and more than 22,000 refugees have been evacuated.

The Louisiana Offshore Oil Port offloaded oil last night for the first time since the hurricane struck. There are currently four additional vessels positioned to offload.

Hazards from weakened and damaged trees, downed power lines, high water, health concerns, and other dangers remain. Federal officials continue to urge citizens to be mindful of instructions from state and local officials who have asked that individuals remain in shelters and away from impacted areas until further notice.

Highlights of the federal response as of 10 a.m. include:

Department of Homeland Security

* Principal Federal Official (PFO). Michael Brown, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) continues to act as the Principal Federal Official. Designated by Secretary Chertoff, the PFO leads the deployment and coordination of all federal response resources and forces in the Gulf Coast region. This role, established under the NRP, streamlines leadership and gives state and local leaders one point for delivery of critical Federal aid and support.

* Jones Act Waiver. Secretary Chertoff signed a waiver of the Jones Act allowing foreign flagged vessels to transport cargo from one U.S. Port to another U.S. Port.

* National Communications System (NCS). National Communications System coordinated the arrival of mobile communications vans, and arranged the delivery of satellite phones, as well as wireless phones programmed for Wireless Priority Service to state and local government leaders and emergency responders. The NCS coordinated equipment delivery from other telecommunications companies and firms.

* Key Federal Statistics for the Gulf Region Response.

Lives Saved
4,500

People Assisted
30,000

Refugees Evacuated-Assisted
22,000

Federal Law Enforcement Officers
400

U. S. Coast Guard
4,000

National Guard
15,000

U. S. Military Forces
7.843

Relief Supplies Delivered (tons)
125 tons

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

* FEMA continues with the first priority of life saving efforts, with resources being directed to those with the most urgent needs.

* FEMA deployed more than 57 National Disaster Medical System Teams and 28 urban search and rescue teams with nearly 1,800 personnel to save lives and render medical assistance.

* As of Sept. 1, there were 275 shelters open in eight states with a total population of 76,453.

* A coordinated major airlift of evacuees began today. Evacuees depart the New Orleans Superdome by bus and flown out of the New Orleans International Airport to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. These evacuees are being sheltered at multiple locations in the state of Texas, including San Antonio, Dallas and Houston. Military planes, upon the request of FEMA, are being utilized for this effort. Additionally, FEMA has chartered MD-80 and 737 aircraft from Sprint, Southwest and Champion Airlines to assist in the evacuation effort.

* Fifty-seven teams from the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) have been deployed. Teams include: Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams, Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams, Mental Health, and National Medical Response Teams.

* Seven NDMS Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs) and 3 strike teams are supporting New Orleans medical facilities and hospitals not fully operational as a result of Hurricane Katrina, as well as setting up Mash style tents.

* Five NDMS DMATs and 5 strike teams are working in medical facilities and hospitals in Gulfport, Biloxi and other areas of Mississippi.

* DMATs have truckloads of medical equipment and supplies with them and are trained to handle trauma, pediatrics, surgery and mental health problems.

* NDMS has also identified 2,600 hospital beds in a 12-state area around the affected area and is working with DOD and the Veteran's Administration to move patients from the affected areas to these facilities.

* HHS, VA, DOD and NDMS are working in the public health and medical areas and are working on establishing temporary MASH style facilities for the ambulatory and non-ambulatory cases.

* Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams have also been deployed to provide medical care to pets and livestock, as well as provide any needed veterinary medical care for rescue dogs.

* FEMA has moved millions of commodities of water, ice, and meals ready to eat (MRE). FEMA has supplied generators and thousands of cots and blankets.

* FEMA established a Housing Area Command to oversee all temporary housing operations across the Hurricane Katrina impacted areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Housing Strike Teams are being readied for deployment into each state to begin the process of quantifying temporary housing needs.

* Individuals in declared counties can register online for disaster assistance at www.fema.gov or call FEMA's toll free registration line at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362).

U.S. Coast Guard

* More than 4,000 people have been rescued off of rooftops, flooded neighborhoods, and hospitals in the New Orleans area since rescue operations began Monday, and joint-agency rescue operations are continuing through the day and night.

* Coast Guard assets and 4,000 personnel from all over the country have been deployed to the area. Many were in place before the storm hit, and more are on their way. Forty-eight aircraft from nine air stations are on scene.

* The Coast Guard's primary focus along the Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana coast will remain search and rescue as long as necessary. The Coast Guard has set up a Web site where people who are still in need of rescue, or for those who know of someone in need, can submit information at <http://homeport.uscg.mil>. People should also contact their state emergency operation centers at (225) 925-7707 or 7709 or 3511 or 7412.

* The Secretary of Homeland Security has increased the number of reservists the Coast Guard is authorized to recall to active duty from 550 to 800.

* The 270-foot Coast Guard Cutter Spencer arrived in New Orleans yesterday and is anchored in the river providing communications and logistical support to Coast Guard rescue personnel.

* Waterway surveys continue. The Port of Destin/Panama City is now open to vessels with a 34-foot draft or less. The status of all other ports and waterways has not changed.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

* CBP is currently providing air and marine support to FEMA and several state agencies in an effort to aid the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

* In addition to the aircraft, more than 200 CBP agents and officers have been deployed to the affected area to provide security and law enforcement support during the evacuation.

* CBP field offices in Tampa and Miami have staged relief teams of 30 support personnel, complete with equipment and supplies, to assist with the aftermath.

National Guard

* There are more than 15,000 National Guard members on state active duty in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Within the next few days that number will rise to nearly 30,000.

* Over the next three days, there will be an average of 1,400 Guardsmen per day arriving in Louisiana to augment law enforcement efforts.

* The National Guard continues to deploy personnel and critical

equipment to the affected states through their state emergency management agencies.

* The affected states are assessing the situation and requesting equipment and personnel to respond to the immediate needs through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

* Through EMAC agreements more than 320,000 National Guard soldiers and airmen and their equipment from all states are available to support emergency operations.

* The National Guard remains under the command and control of state civil authority and is in support of the chief law enforcement officer of the parish or county. The National Guard is augmenting civilian law enforcement in support of their missions, not acting in lieu of it.

* The Guard is working with state and local authorities to assist in meeting the homecoming challenges of returning soldiers and airmen.

Department of Defense (DOD)

* NORTHCOM established Joint Task Force (JTF) Katrina to act as the military's on-scene command in support of FEMA. Lt. Gen. Russel Honore, commander of the First Army in Fort Gillem, Ga., is the JTF-Commander. JTF Katrina will be based out of Camp Shelby, Miss.

* In addition to Coast Guard and National Guard personnel, nearly 3,500 members of the Department of Defense are involved with relief operations as of mid-afternoon on Sept. 1. This number is expected to increase as more requests for support from FEMA are processed and assigned to units.

* DOD's Defense Logistics Agency provided 9.3 million Meals, Ready to Eat (MREs). Distribution efforts are under way to get these meals to the people of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

* 125,000 MREs arrived and are being distributed to people at the Superdome in New Orleans. Another 25,000 MREs and three trucks carrying drinking water are scheduled to arrive today.

* U.S. Transportation Command is scheduled to begin flying evacuees from New Orleans to Lackland AFB, Texas, on C-17 transport planes today

* USS Bataan (LHD 5) and HSV Swift out of Naval Station Ingleside, Texas, sailed to the waters off Louisiana to provide support. Currently, the four MH-53s and two HH-60s off the Bataan are flying medevac and search and rescue missions in Louisiana and Mississippi. Bataan's hospital may also be used for medical support.

* Six hundred 25,000-pound sand bags were delivered Sept. 1 to the U.S. Gulf Coast area and are currently being used to repair broken levees. Another 200 bags are expected today.

* The hospital ship USNS Comfort is scheduled to sail from Baltimore, Maryland, Sept. 2 or 3. Anticipated arrival in the Gulf Coast area is Sept. 8 or 9.

* The Iwo Jima Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) is sailing from Norfolk, Va. loaded with disaster response equipment. The (ESG) consists of USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), USS Shreveport (LPD 12), and USS Tortuga (LSD 46). USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8) is already on station providing fuel and stores for naval support efforts. The ESG is expected to be operating off the Louisiana coast beginning Sept. 4.

* The hospital ship USNS Mercy is scheduled to sail from San Diego, Calif., Sept. 7. Scheduled arrival to the U.S. Gulf Coast is Sept. 21.

* The carrier USS Harry S. Truman and dock landing ship USS Whidbey Island set sail for the U.S. Gulf Coast in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) relief operations. Truman will serve as the command center and afloat staging base, and will carry additional helicopters from Naval Air Station Mayport to support search and rescue efforts. Whidbey Island will bring with it the capability to employ a movable causeway to the region.

* In addition to Coast Guard aircraft, 113 helicopters - 61 National Guard and 52 DoD -- are supporting FEMA operations. Eight civilian swift water rescue teams have been transferred from California via C-5 and C-17 airlift from March and Travis Air Force Bases to assist with recovery ops.

* U.S. Transportation Command is providing medical airlift support to transport approximately 2,500 patients from New Orleans International Airport to National Disaster Medical System federal coordinating centers.

* Joint Forces Command is providing Department of Defense leased property at the former England AFB in Louisiana as an intermediate staging base to support hurricane response in the state of Louisiana. This will serve as a staging point for National Guard personnel arriving from other states to support the Louisiana relief efforts.

* Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.; Naval Air Station Meridian, Miss.; Barksdale Air Force Base, La.; Alexandria, La.; and Ft. Polk, La.; will serve as federal operational staging areas to expedite the movement of relief supplies and emergency personnel to affected areas.

* The USS Grapple (ARS 53) is en route with 31 divers aboard to assist with maritime and underwater survey and salvage operations.

Department of Justice (DOJ)

* The USMS Justice & Prisoner Alien Transportation System (JPATS) has launched two Boeing 737 aircraft to evacuate displaced persons to Houston, Texas, upon request from FEMA, and will continuously shuttle between Houston and New Orleans during daylight hours.

* DOJ has begun work on a task force to deter, investigate, and prosecute disaster-related crimes such as insurance fraud, and charity fraud, and to ensure that fuel and other prices remain at competitive levels.

* DOJ agencies and personnel are securing federal law enforcement facilities and are working on-site and from relocation sites in Shreveport and Baton Rouge to continue enforcing Federal laws.

* DOJ components are drawing upon longstanding close relations with state and local law enforcement to assist them to the maximum extent possible. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the United States Marshals Service (USMS), and the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) are responding to requests from state and local agencies for communications, air support, HAZMAT, medical, and other assistance. DEA is coordinating with Texas and Arkansas Pharmacy Boards to provide assistance with emergency prescription refill procedures due to requests that have started to come from Louisiana residents.

* USMS personnel have been deployed to assist with the transport and security of stockpile supplies. The Bureau of Justice Assistance will also be making millions of dollars of grant money immediately available to state and local law enforcement entities in the affected areas.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

* EPA emergency response personnel are working in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to continue assessing the damage and preparing for cleanup in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. EPA is responsible for cleanup of hazardous material including oil and gasoline in the area. EPA employees are deployed to the region to assist with assessment and cleanup. National and regional emergency operations centers are currently operating 24 hours a day.

* To alleviate possible fuel shortages across the United States and to help meet emergency demand in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi, EPA will temporarily allow refiners, importers, distributors, carriers and retail outlets to supply gasoline and diesel fuels that do not meet standards for emissions. This waiver is effective immediately and will continue through Sept. 15, 2005.

* EPA teams are currently assessing, evaluating, and supporting drinking water and wastewater facilities in Louisiana and Mississippi.

* EPA personnel are overseeing and offering technical assistance in the disposal of hazardous waste and other debris left behind by the storm. Teams are working closely with the Coast Guard to conduct assessments of potential oil spills and chemical releases caused by the hurricane.

* EPA has mobilized 12 environmental emergency response teams to the affected areas in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. These teams are providing assistance with overall "search and recovery" efforts and are conducting initial assessments of the environmental impacts of Hurricane Katrina, including potential impacts from chemical facilities, oil refineries and water treatment plants.

* EPA has sent 39 of its watercraft to assist in the current rescue efforts.

* EPA's environmental surveillance aircraft are being used to assess spills and chemical releases.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

* HHS is working with DOD to set up 10 Federal Medical Shelters, each with a 250 bed capacity. The Federal Medical Shelters will be located at Fort Polk, La. (4 Federal Medical Shelters); Elgin Air Force Base, Fla. (2 Federal Medical Shelters); Meridian Naval Air Station, Miss. (2 Federal Medical Shelters); and Jackson National Air Guard Facility, Miss. (2 Federal Medical Shelters).

* Evacuation of patients from New Orleans hospitals began yesterday. The first 194 patients were flown out of the New Orleans airport. Hospitals across the nation participating in the National Disaster Medical System are making beds available as part of the medical response.

* HHS has already shipped 32 tons of basic first aid materials and supplies to the area, and the Centers for Disease Control and Food and Drug Administration are assembling public health teams.

Department of Energy

* Department of Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman announced today that the Department of Energy has approved a request for a loan of 6 million barrels of crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) to Exxon-Mobil Corp.

* The amount is larger than the total of 5.4 million barrels loaned during Hurricane Ivan.

* The crude oil will be loaned under short-term contractual agreements and returned to the Reserve once supply conditions return to normal.

Department of Transportation (DOT)

* The Department of Transportation has dispatched more than 400 trucks to move 1,200 truckloads containing 5.4 million MREs (Meals Ready to Eat); 13.4 million liters of water; 10,400 tarps; 4,900 rolls of plastic sheeting; 3.4 million pounds of ice; 10 mobile homes; 144 generators; 20 containers of disaster supplies; 135,000 blankets; 11,000 cots; 200 tables; 450 chairs; 7 trucks of medical supplies; 1 trailer with cylinders of oxygen; 1 all-terrain vehicle; 19 forklifts and three 100-person and nine 50-person field office kits to flood damaged areas.

* DOT also has five helicopters and one plane in use supporting deliveries of essential supplies to hardest hit and least accessible areas.

* DOT dispatched a team of over 70 transportation experts to support state and local officials in the assessment of damage to highways, railroads, airports, transit systems, ports and pipelines and to support planning for detours and repairs to these critical transportation systems.

* AMTRAK will be sending a train to New Orleans today to assist in the evacuation of citizens to safe areas.

* DOT also has temporarily waived federal rules limiting the hours that repair crews and truck drivers hauling gasoline, diesel and jet fuel can work in response to the hurricane emergency.

* DOT has worked with oil pipeline operators to transport generators and help get the two primary east-coast pipeline shippers - Colonial and Plantation - back up and running on a limited basis. Oil flow will continue to increase today and through the weekend as we deliver more generators and power companies restore more service to help get more pumping stations back on line.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

* The U.S. Department of Agriculture is sending experienced emergency response personnel to assist in incident response coordination. To date, the Forest Service has assigned 13 management and logistical teams and 35 crews of 20 people each to the affected areas and host communities. These resources are intended to assist in setting up logistics staging areas, the distribution of food products, and debris removal.

* USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is providing food at shelters and mass feeding sites, issuing emergency food stamps and infant formula, and distributing food packages directly to needy households. 80,000 pounds of USDA-donated commodities which consist of mixed meats, cheese, peanut butter, and pudding, arrived in Baton Rouge, La. today. Additionally, four trucks of baby food products were ordered for immediate shipment. One truck of infant formula will arrive in Baton Rouge today. The other three trucks of baby food products are on the way.

* FNS will provide waivers to food stamp recipients to enable them to use funds to purchase hot meals and will be expediting delivery of September benefits. Two truckloads of commodities have been dispatched to New Orleans with more to follow as requested.

* USDA Rural Development will provide a six-month moratorium on payments for 50,000 low-income residents in the affected areas. USDA will also be taking an inventory of vacant USDA housing to help accommodate displaced residents.

Department of Labor

* The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) continues

to coordinate with the interagency community in providing support as outlined in the National Response Plan.

* OSHA Region VI has deployed its eight member Emergency Response Team to Baton Rouge to assess the situation and provide technical assistance to recovery workers and utility employers engaged in power restoration.

* In addition, OSHA is contacting major power companies in the affected areas to provide safety briefings to employees at power restoration staging areas.

* OSHA is releasing public service announcements to inform workers about hazards related to restoration and cleanup.

* OSHA has identified all Lowes and Home Depot stores in Louisiana and will be distributing safety and health fact sheets and materials to these locations.

Department of State

* The Department of State advises concerned family members of foreign nationals residing or traveling in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina to try to reach their family members by phone, email, or other available means.

* If family member cannot be reached, the State Department recommends they contact their embassy in Washington, D.C. for assistance. Reports from the region indicate that some phone lines are working but experiencing heavy call volume, so family members are encouraged to keep trying if lines are busy.

Department of Treasury

* The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) announced special relief for taxpayers in the Presidential Disaster Areas struck by the hurricane. These taxpayers generally will have until October 31 to file tax returns and submit tax payments. The IRS will stop interest and any late filing or late payment penalties that would otherwise apply. This relief includes the September 15 due date for estimated taxes and for calendar-year corporate returns with automatic extensions.

American Red Cross

* Shelters - More than 250 American Red Cross shelters are open in nine states: Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, Florida and Georgia, with more on standby.

* Evacuees - More than 93,000 evacuees are being sheltered, not including the operation to transition evacuees from the Superdome in New Orleans to the Astrodome in Houston.

* Emergency Vehicles - Nearly 205 Red Cross Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs) and more than 1,000 support vehicles are now in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, to conduct food distribution.

* Relief Workers - More than 3,300 Red Cross staff and volunteers across the country and from every part of the organization have deployed to the affected area are working around the clock to serve the public need.

* Feeding - The Red Cross served more than 100,000 meals overnight and is working closely with several partners, including the Southern Baptist Convention, the Adventists and Second Harvest to provide emergency food to survivors and responders. In coordination with the Southern Baptists, preparations are underway to serve nearly 500,000 hot meals each day.

* Houston Astrodome Shelter - The Red Cross is supporting government officials in the relocation of more than 23,000 hurricane survivors from the Superdome in New Orleans to the Astrodome in Houston. The organization is mobilizing to provide blankets, cots and food for the evacuees.

* Health & Preventative Care - The Red Cross is working with government and health services partners to develop health strategies and preventative measures to help the public and relief workers cope with the serious public health emergency.

* The Red Cross relies on donations of the American people to do its work. Citizens can help by calling 1-800-HELP-NOW (1-800-435-7669) or by making an online contribution to the Disaster Relief Fund at www.redcross.org.

* Because of logistical issues, the Red Cross cannot accept donations of food or clothing.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security